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# 'Philby Conspiracy' Tops 'My Silent War' in Telling Spy Story

**THE PHILBY CONSPIRACY.** By Bruce Page, David Leitch and Phillip Kneibitely. Doubleday. \$5.95.

**MY SILENT WAR.** By Kim Philby. Grove Press. \$5.95.

THE FIRST is Book of the Month Club selection for July. The choice is deserved. "Conspiracy" is documentary literature which surely will bring much serious discussion on subjects penetrating to the heart of democracy—questions of citizen motivation, freedom and the relationship of spies to their government.

Harold A. R. (Kim) Philby was a Cambridge-educated Russian spy. He gave his allegiance to communism in the early 1930s and rose to a pinnacle of success in the early 1950s. He not only was permitted to spy against his own country; he was also put in charge of British counterintelligence against the Soviet Union.

As such, Philby made a mockery of British and American security agencies. Along with two lesser Soviet spies, Burgess and Maclean, Philby gave the Soviets a fabulous amount of Free World information, some of it most sensitive in nature.

The revelations suggest that had the late Sen. Joseph McCarthy been alive when Philby fled to Russia in 1953 McCarthy would have been able to claim substantiation for at least some of his charges of Communist infiltration in the U.S. government.

"The Philby Conspiracy" isn't a large

book (376 pages) but it represents a massive amount of research. The three authors work for The Sunday Times in London and were part of a 13-member research team assigned by the paper to explore the "Philby business."

They've done a good job—so good that they far exceed the literary quality of Philby's own story, "My Silent War." Philby's personal story was written after Philby defected to Moscow. It is narrow in scope and—worse—is "loaded." Philby, as a Russian spy-master, tells nothing that would be of value to non-Communists. Everything gets in the way of a good story, so to speak.

The "Conspiracy" book begins with a discussion of Philby's early years at Cambridge and keeps asking the maddening question of why official Britain allowed Philby to advance so rapidly along the road to infiltration of his own government. The authors answer the question only partially. One reason is that Britain was in a political vacuum for most of the years between the world wars. Another reason was that Philby was able to rely on the "old school tie" for help even when evidence against him was overwhelming.

THESE SUMMATIONS, laid down in crisp style, make up a sharp condemnation of British governance before, during, and after World War II. The writers ask why Philby was never really screened before his major appointments (his procommunism was wide-

ly known) and why the government was capable of such grand stupidities as sending a frogman (who drank and was short of breath) to spy on the hull of a visiting Russian warship at a time when Britain and Russia were moving closer together.

One of this book's shrewdest observations is that Britain hadn't known political or ideological infiltration since the religious struggles of Elizabethan times; it was thus incomprehensible in 1940 to believe that an Englishman of good upbringing could scheme against his own nation. The authors don't shirk from the final lesson: which is that democracy cannot be defended by people who

are politically illiterate and unaware of the reasons for the growth of communism and other "isms."

The Philby file is growing. These volumes supplement "The Third Man" by E. H. Cockridge (Putnam, \$5.95) which appeared last month. "The Third Man" doesn't have the scope of "Conspiracy" but varies little in general approach; it does, however, give a bit more discussion of Philby's childhood. It isn't nearly as detailed as "The Philby Conspiracy" and probably places Philby, Burgess and Maclean in closer contact with each other than facts warrant.